

JUNE 2011

# 3d RECONNAISSANCE BATTALION

## Newsletter



## Letter from the Commanding Officer

Dear Friends & Family,

As most of you are already aware, 3d Recon Battalion has arrived in Afghanistan from Okinawa and turned over with its sister battalion, 2d Recon. After a few days of mandatory classes and training, the Marines and Sailors of 3d Recon Bn moved north and took over Patrol Base Alcatraz from 2d Recon Bn. PB Alcatraz is located in the Sangin District of Helmand Province, Afghanistan, and will be the Battalion's home for the foreseeable future.

Living conditions here are very austere. There are no showers, laundry facilities, chow hall, or pretty much anything else one would think of as a necessity of modern life (yet we do have an internet connection!). The Marines and Sailors have made the best of it, however, and they are adapting to the conditions while plans are in the works to slowly improve the base. In the meantime though, the camp or water bottle shower remains the best we can do to keep clean and cool. Our mail has caught up with us at Alcatraz and is picked up and delivered about once a week.

The Battalion has been conducting operations in the Upper Sangin Valley since early June. The Marines and Sailors have adjusted well to the heat—in June and July daytime highs here routinely reach 120° F--and everyone is focused on working to accomplish the Battalion's mission of disrupting insurgent activity and establishing security for the local populace. We go about these tasks hand in hand with our brothers in arms from the Afghan National Army. The task is complex, but the Battalion has shown that it is more than up to the challenge and that our pre-deployment training will serve us very well.



As I get ready to close this letter, I want to make you aware that the Battalion has already suffered its first wounded as a result of action against the enemy. Cpl Dillon Marshall (Co C) and Cpl William McIntyre (Co B) were both wounded during the course of operations in early June. Both performed flawlessly under fire and are expected to make a full recovery.

Thank you for the continued support that you provide to your deployed Marines and Sailors. Maintaining the connection with home is the key ingredient to maintaining morale, keeping our heads in the game, and making sure that we succeed in our assigned task. I am sure that I speak for everyone when I say that we miss you all already and you all are in our thoughts as we prepare to tackle the next few months.

LtCol Travis Homiak  
Commanding Officer  
3d Reconnaissance Bn (FWD)

JUNE 2011

# 3d RECONNAISSANCE BATTALION

## Newsletter



## Letter from the Sergeant Major

3d Recon Families and Friends, hello to all,

The Battalion arrived and has finally received the last of our personnel and we have started operating in our assigned area. The deployment got off to a slow and challenging start in Okinawa with a downpour at Kadena, which made for a very cold and uncomfortable flight. We arrived in country minus 16 of our brothers who I'm sure went through their own trials and tribulations to meet us out here this past week. They were delayed in Okinawa due to aircraft weight restrictions that also pushed back our departure by a few hours. Our journey took us through Manus, Kyrgyzstan, where we had an approximately 36-hour layover. We continued on via military air to arrive at Camp Leatherneck on the 16th of May. On arrival and once everyone unpacked, almost all had to lay out their gear to dry from the soaking we received in Okinawa. The few days that were spent on Leatherneck, Marines and Sailors alike participated in required training prior to pushing out to Patrol Base Alcatraz. The training received was a refresher on items that we had been exposed to at EMV and in Okinawa. It was a great way to get our minds set for the task at hand. Multiple hours were also spent planning for our future operation and prepping gear to move forward.

PB Alcatraz has no showers, running water, bathrooms or A/C, and yet, in my opinion, living conditions are better than housing on Okinawa. All have turned to working and sleep is at a minimum. Marines and Sailors are pulling guard duty, radio watch, conducting convoy operations, and countless other tasks all the while performing in their MOS's without missing a beat. Improving the living conditions and security of the camp continues each and every day. One major



improvement that will be completed this week is a chow hall. I have heard your concerns about mail not making it through in a timely manner. Please understand that our location relative to Camp Leatherneck requires about a half a day's convoy to bring mail and needed supplies to the PB. These convoys vary, but rest assured mail is being pushed forward as soon as possible. As we continue to improve the quality of life, delivery times for mail will also improve. In closing, I want to thank you all so very much for your continued support and sacrifices. You are all equally missed and in our thoughts and prayers each and every day.

SgtMaj Mark Arvizu  
Battalion Sergeant Major  
3d Reconnaissance Bn (FWD)

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# 3d RECONNAISSANCE BATTALION

## Newsletter



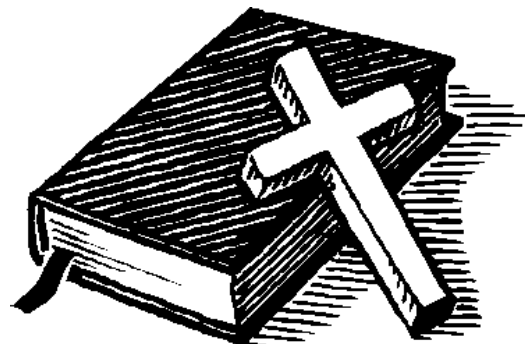
### Letter from the Chaplain

Greetings Recon Family!

I hope things are well for you at home. The majority of us in this Battalion learned over one year ago that 3d Recon would soon deploy to Afghanistan. From the beginning stages of our training to the final phase of our preparation there was an overwhelming sense of excitement among Marines and Sailors, a sense of purpose or existence of being. After all, the combat setting is the exact environment Marines envision before making the commitment to serve.

With that said, however, the feelings among our family members were somewhat different. Yes, you were excited about this deployment, but for an entirely different reason. You were excited because we were excited; you were happy because we were happy; you showed unwavering support despite any uncertainty. You remained steadfast and consistent, never once calling into question our desire to deploy. Therefore, whether you are a parent, sibling, spouse or child, we thank you so very much for all that you do. While numerous people often thank us for our active duty service, we thank you for yours.

We have now completed four weeks of our thirty-week deployment. The days seem long, but the weeks go fast. Watch, we will be home before you know it. We love and miss you very much, and will continue to pray for you, as we know you are fervently praying for us. James 5:16 says, "The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results." May God continue to bless you and your families during this deployment.



Blessings!  
Chaplain Benefield  
3d Reconnaissance Bn (FWD)

JUNE 2011

# HEADQUARTERS PHOTOS



Marines wait patiently for departure from Camp Schwab.



LtCol Homiak and SgtMaj Arvizu conduct the transfer of authority with the leadership of 2d Reconnaissance Battalion on 3 June 2011 in Sangin District, Helmand Province.





Marines and Sailors depart Camp Leatherneck for Patrol Base Alcatraz.



Sgt Juarez demolishes a vacant building to make room for camp improvements.



Marines clean up aftermath of demolition.



Bravo 2 waits pensively before their first mission.





Chaplain Benefield reads Scripture and prays with Marines prior to their mission.



The H&S Security Platoon sleeps after an all night convoy.



Recon's Mormon Lay Leader, Capt Booker, conducts his Sunday morning service.



# HEADQUARTERS AND SERVICE Co

## Newsletter



## Letter from the H&S Commanding Officer

Greetings from Patrol Base Alcatraz, to the family and friends of the Marines of H&S Company!

As I am writing this your Marine or Sailor and the Company as a whole is hard at work turning our little slice of Afghanistan into an efficient and well run base of operations for the Battalion. As the name implies Patrol Base Alcatraz is a very austere location lacking many of the day-to-day comforts we are use to back home. Yet due to the hard work of your Marine and Sailor, we have made great strides in just our first month, transforming the Patrol Base into a place that provides your Marine and Sailor security and a few comforts from home.

As you may be aware, logistics is a huge piece of the pie that ensures the Battalion has the supplies and equipment it needs to sustain itself and help the Afghan people. I would like to take this time recognize the hard work of Cpl Collins Foster and GySgt Jesse Smith from the Battalion Supply section. They have worked endless hours requesting, accumulating, and issuing gear and equipment to support our mission here at Patrol Base Alcatraz. Additionally, the detailed planning from our logisticians, GySgt Jose Lomeli and 2ndLt Christopher Flood, have ensured we have exactly what we need to accomplish our mission plus a few extras. Just recently through our supply section and logistics section were able to get two large refrigerators to Patrol Base Alcatraz which will give the Marines their first drink of ice cold water in three weeks, a huge morale boost.

Assisting in keeping the Battalion literally "rolling" has been our Motor Transportation section



under the leadership of SSgt Robert Howell. Over the last month our mechanics have repaired over 30 vehicles and kept us firing on all cylinders. Sgt Franklin Juarez and LCpl Curt Heitmeyer have been a two man automotive repair shop here at Patrol Base Alcatraz whipping the vehicles into shape. The Commanding General, 2d Marine Division recently recognized LCpl Heitmeyer's performance with a coin during his recent visit to PB Alcatraz.

Your Marines have also played an integral part in providing security here at the patrol base and for resupply convoys. These efforts have ensured your Marine or Sailor can sleep and relax in a secure environment allowing them to always be prepared for their day-to-day mission. Instrumental to these security efforts have been Sgt Hollis Bouldin, LCpl Jonathan Rocha, Cpl Daniel Wilson, and LCpl De'Antonio Johnson.

I would also like to recognize the efforts of the communications section which works tirelessly to insure the Battalion can communicate and is the true life line of the Battalion as we conduct operations. Cpl Mathew Walker and Cpl Robert Pinchak have proved invaluable

as they keep our computer systems up and running, while Cpl Russell Johnson and Cpl Ricardo Medel ensure all of our radios are maintained and functioning. Additionally, the communications section going all out to improve internet and phone services back to you, which I know you are glad to hear.

Something that I am sure you are all curious about is mail. Though it's not the overnight express, know that your packages are being received. We receive mail approximately every two weeks and the items you are sending are a huge multiplier to the morale and bring a little bit of home to Afghanistan. So please, keep them coming. A few items that are always good to send are wet wipes to ward off the dust and socks as laundry is still a bit of a challenge.

Lastly I would like to congratulate Daniel Evans who was recently promoted from Private First Class to Lance Corporal.

Please enjoy the attached pictures of life here at Patrol Base Alcatraz taken by our motivated Combat Chaplain, Lt Benefield.

Sincerely,  
Capt Patrick Holland  
H&S Company Commander  
3d Reconnaissance Bn (FWD)

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## H&S COMPANY PHOTOS



Cpl Henderson is hard at work, knocking down the remaining pillars.



GySgt Parisi and Cpl Bounleuttay take care of morning hygiene





Cpl Johnson and Cpl Pinchak  
enjoy dinner together with Mr.  
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# BRAVO COMPANY

## Newsletter



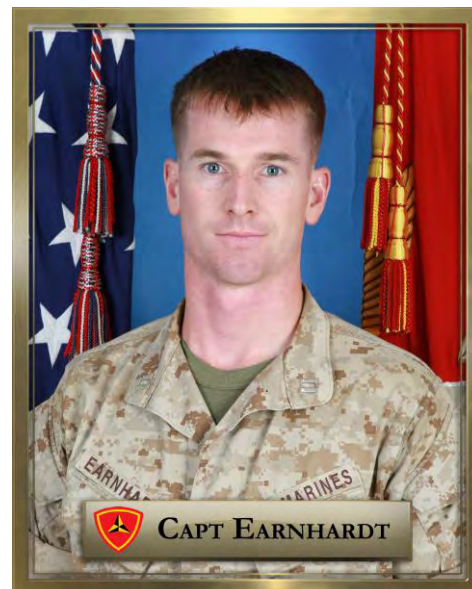
## Letter from the B. Co Commanding Officer

3d Recon Families and Friends, hello to all,

We have successfully completed the turnover with our counterparts from 2d Reconnaissance Battalion and are now conducting operations in Sangin District, Helmand Province. We are focused on integrating with our brothers in the Afghan National Army, enlarging our patrol base, and disrupting insurgent activity in the upper Sangin Valley. These three areas form the framework for all of our missions.

This counterinsurgency environment is dynamic and requires our Marines to rapidly transition from engaging the local populace to combating a determined foe. Operating here requires mature, disciplined Marines guided by a well-calibrated moral compass. The Marine Corps developed some of this, but the majority of this ethical foundation was instilled by you. Our Marines have never hesitated to mete out controlled violence to those deserving individuals, but have also shown a great deal of restraint when necessary to avoid causing unnecessary harm.

Leading our Marines is truly an honor and I consider it a great privilege to stand amongst them at such a pivotal time and place in our history. It is humbling to see them perform at such a high level on a daily basis. They have met every task with vigor and enthusiasm and have stood firm in the face of the enemy. They have exceeded my greatest expectations and I am proud to be here with them.



May Promotions to Corporal  
Ryan Teague

May Promotion to Sergeant  
Michael Barczak, Robert Fanning

June Promotion to Corporal  
Nicholas Pelepchan, Scott Edelblute (Meritoriously)

I would also like to congratulate;  
1stLt John Tucker, selected to the rank of Captain  
SSgt Kousuke Sasaki, selected to the rank of GySgt and  
Sgt Christopher Joliet II, selected to the rank of SSgt  
I would also like to Welcome to the Recon Family the recently married;  
Michelle Bush, Courtney Chirido, Andrea Pilios and Sylvia Willis

Semper Fidelis,  
Capt Eric Earnhardt  
Bravo Company Commander  
3d Reconnaissance Bn (FWD)

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# BRAVO COMPANY PHOTOS



Nicholas Pelepchan, promoted to  
Cpl on 1 June



Capt Eric Earnhardt talking with  
some local kids.







HM2 Anthony Bunkley giving an elder a shot, he was suspected of having kidney stones. Following the shot, the man laughingly said, "more pain".



Scott Edelblute was promoted to Cpl on 2 June

JUNE 2011

# CHARLIE COMPANY

## Newsletter



## Letter from the C. Co Commanding Officer

Dear Friends and Family of Company C,

We started on this journey over a year ago. Finally I can tell you that we made it here. We took a short pit stop at Camp Leatherneck for some mandatory classes and training and ultimately arrived at our destination at Patrol Base Alcatraz. We did a turn over with Company A of our sister battalion 2d Recon. PB Alcatraz is taking some time getting used to especially without the comforts of home like running water, showers, or a nice warm bed in which to sleep. The Marines and Sailors are coming along with the adjustments to the heat and the transition to baby wipes and bottled water showers. The camp is also beginning to take shape. Progress with the bare necessities like building a safer and stronger patrol base, chow hall, and finally running water for showers, is occurring. All that being said, I would like to take this time to give some special recognition to some Marines of the Company:

### May Promotions to Corporal:

Justus Thompson

### May Promotions to Sergeant:

Brandon Baal, Christopher Garrett, Jordan Polk

### June Promotions to Sergeant:

Patrick Barry

I would also like to congratulate Sgt Matthew Brown and his wife, Emily, who are expecting a new baby in December, as well as Sgt Ivan Cherry and his wife, Jennifer, who are expecting in October.



I close with these final words. Thank you for your continued support. The love of family and friends allow us to continue to make a difference in our assigned task. Our thoughts go out to you as we continue with the hardships of our deployment.

Capt Jonathan Joseph  
Charlie Commanding Officer  
3d Reconnaissance Bn (FWD)



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# CHARLIE COMPANY PHOTOS



Charlie Co Marines work out during their spare time.



Charlie Co Marines and others attend the Sunday Morning Worship Service.